



In the Fellowship of His Suffering

Elahe Hessamfar

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""Schizophrenia"" is by many accounts the most devastating illness of our time. In this book, Elahe Hessamfar uses her personal encounter with her daughter's illness to bring the reader to experience the pain and anguish of those who suffer so intensely. She candidly discusses the gripping and dark realities her family has faced in the midst of this journey and exposes that the ride isn't easy, but it can be fruitful and purposeful, and it can be a journey of joy and peace if understood from the intended perspective. This is a fascinating and deeply theological portrayal of madness under the mighty hand of God. It challenges and awakens the reader to a heightened awareness about self, community, pain, brokenness, sin, grace, and redemption. This is the first truly biblically based, theological interpretation of madness in conversation with psychiatry and social sciences. Hessamfar passionately discusses the shortcomings of our current medical model of mental illness and directs the reader's attention to the mistreatment of those the medical community labels with ""schizophrenia."" She argues that not only is ""schizophrenia"" not pathological but it touches on the most fundamental fragilities of the human soul, and hence, it is a critical pastoral issue. Hessamfar offers tangible, inspiring, and life-changing solutions for those dealing with this most elusive and mysterious phenomenon--solutions that would bring hope and healing to the hopeless people chained in the abyss of madness. ""Hessamfar has brought together theology, psychiatry, pastoral care, and personal experience in a book that gives us a foundation for wise care and ministry to a misunderstood group. Her work is crammed with possible application."" --Edward Welch, Christian Counselling and Educational Foundation (CCEF), Glenside, PA ""A demanding book. Although it is a very serious subject, it is written in a beautiful way and with a clear purpose: to make a change."" --Carina Hakansson, Family Care Foundation, Gothenburg, Sweden ""This profoundly insightful resource is a masterful formulation of biblical anthropology, providing one of the best--if not the best-- ground-level theological examinations of madness in recent years. Concerned with the application of biblical revelation to the human condition, and offering hope to the hurting, this well-written exploration brings spiritual sanity to an affliction that too often is avoided, to the detriment of the Christian community."" --John T. Sowell, Reformed Theological Seminary, Atlanta, GA ""A truly remarkable and unforgettable book. By narrating life with her daughter with a crisp accuracy and brutal honesty, Elahe Hessamfar brings before us some hard theological questions. Her analysis is full of insight about how we might think about the shape of Christian hope and witness in the shadow of such threatening conditions."" --Brian Brock, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen, Scotland ""Hessamfar marshals experimental data, candid admissions by bewildered psychiatric experts, and the narrative voices of people labeled 'schizophrenic' to show that the psychiatric establishment has failed to show that 'schizophrenia' is a unified syndrome. Beyond exposing this failure, Hessamfar gives compelling reasons for thinking that the church ought to get off the sidelines and take up the task of caring for people with the full range of healing modalities suggested by a biblical anthropology. She argues convincingly that building relationships of love and trust with patients by listening carefully to their voices will be a vital first step in a biblically sound approach to caring for those now dismissed under the classification 'schizophrenic.' Hessamfar's scholarship is extensive, ranging from the complex world brain physiology, to the discourse of philosophical critiques of the medical establishment, and to spiritually rich works of theological anthropology. This book demands the attention of anyone who is genuinely conce

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